



Northgate Framework Resolution Advice #4

Date: November 22, 2004

To: Mayor Greg Nickels and Members of the Seattle City Council

From: Ron LaFayette, Chair, and Michelle Rupp, Vice-Chair, on Behalf of the Northgate Stakeholders Group

Subject: STAKEHOLDERS ADVICE #4: Proposed Redevelopment of Northgate Mall

The Mayor of Seattle and the Seattle City Council have sought the advice of the Northgate Stakeholders Group regarding the first phase of the proposed redevelopment of the Northgate Mall by Simon Property Group.

Virtually all of the work carried out by the Stakeholders Group since its inception has some bearing on the Simon proposal. This includes our formal comments on the development of the South Lot by Lorig Associates and the City of Seattle, and our ongoing role in the preparation of the Coordinated Transportation Improvement Plan (CTIP) for the area.

The Stakeholders have received information regarding Simon plans on several occasions. On July 22, September 23, and October 26 Stakeholders discussed various aspects of these plans and/or asked questions of Simon representatives. What has emerged from these three review sessions is a sharper focus on two redevelopment issues which will require attention by the City not only at this stage, but throughout the redevelopment process. These issues are:

- The need not just to accommodate but to encourage safe and inviting pedestrian pathways to and from the Northgate Mall from the surrounding area. This need is especially significant given the anticipated increase in pedestrian traffic generated by such projects as the Lorig Development; transit improvements; and the construction of the Library/Community Center.
- The desirability of constructing natural drainage systems that will effectively deal with runoff and protect the area's environment and quality of life.

The Stages of Review

The Stakeholders are mindful that there are numerous steps that have been and will be taken in redeveloping the Mall and surrounding area. In each of these cases, the Mayor and Council must make certain the above public interests will be protected.

These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) The already approved agreement between the City of Seattle and Simon Properties in which Simon made the South Lot available and agreed to invest further in the 5th Avenue NE entrance to the Mall.
- 2) Public projects underway near the Northgate Mall, including the Library/Community Center, the 5th Avenue NE Streetscape; Transit Oriented Development being carried out by King County Metro; and South Lot Development.
- 3) Planning processes that shape future investment in the area, including the Coordinated Transportation Improvement Program (CTIP) and the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP) as it is integrated into the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.
- 4) The present discussions and review at the conceptual stage of the Northgate Mall redevelopment taking place between the Northgate Stakeholders Group and representatives of Simon.
- 5) Review of the specific Simon proposal for Northgate redevelopment which will soon be submitted to the City for evaluation by the Design Review Board.
- 6) Development plans for future phases when submitted by Simon or other large site developers.

The Northgate Stakeholders believe the present review of Mall redevelopment plans at their conceptual stage is an excellent opportunity for community leaders to exchange critical information with representatives of Simon and provide recommendations to them. For instance, the plans for safe and inviting pedestrian pathways presented by Simon to Stakeholders on October 26 included several improvements that Stakeholders had recommended.

However, the Stakeholders are mindful that this conceptual stage will be followed by the submission of formal plans in whose review the Stakeholders have no direct role. We plan to monitor the ongoing activities of the City, Simon and the Design Review Board with the expectation that continued attention to pedestrian pathways and natural drainage methods will be displayed.

Pedestrian Plans, Traffic Impacts, and Parking

The bulk of Stakeholder inquiries have been concentrated around the ways in which pedestrians will enter and move around the redeveloped property. As the project moves forward from the conceptual stage, the Stakeholders seek more detailed plans from Simon that anticipate and respond to growing pedestrian impacts and needs around the entire perimeter of the property.

The concerns of the Stakeholders on these issues have centered upon the number and quality of initial pedestrian access points to the Northgate property, the walkable edge and pedestrian friendliness of the streetscape, and the ease and options of movement for pedestrians once they enter the property.

1. As noted above, the City of Seattle and Simon should guarantee that Simon's pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic planning is integrated with planning related to the several

Dept. of Planning & Development
Northgate Stakeholders
(Document title and date)

other projects that are anticipated to be completed over the next decade. These include the Library/Community Center, the Lorig South Lot Development, and transit-related development plans of King Country Metro. The City and Simon should also anticipate pedestrian and bicycle flows that can emerge from future Sound Transit projects and from North Seattle Community College.

2. The 5th Avenue NE streetscape and Northgate Mall entryway projects are critical elements of improving the pedestrian environment. The Northgate Stakeholders Group was asked to play an advisory role to the Seattle Department of Transportation on this project. Among the concerns that must be addressed over time are ways to improve pedestrian friendliness in areas of 5th Avenue NE that will not be covered by the current project. In addition, the City, King County and Lorig plan pedestrian improvements along 3rd Avenue NE which must be integrated with Simon's plans.
3. The Stakeholders Group remains concerned that the City has not yet developed plans to improve safety for pedestrians entering the Northgate Mall property from the north and requests that the City prepare plans to address this situation.
4. The Simon conceptual plan includes the design of a parking structure south of the Mall and a pedestrian bridge to enter the Mall from the parking structure. Stakeholders want to make certain that these plans and the city review process guarantee multiple, effective pedestrian pathways that will take advantage of the increased pedestrian activity south of the Mall. In addition, Stakeholders are aware that there are parking capacity discussions in which the Simon and Lorig developers, King County Metro and the City are all parties of interest. Stakeholders urge adequate distribution of parking capacity so that neighboring businesses and surrounding neighborhoods will not be negatively impacted.
5. All parties should continue to monitor the nature of pedestrian walkways located on the Mall property itself. Simon representatives have discussed encouraging plans which anticipate walkways that clearly and attractively separate pedestrians from automobiles, improve lighting, and slow vehicular traffic.

Stormwater Management

Members of the Northgate Stakeholders Group have participated in discussions with representatives of Simon and Seattle Public Utilities regarding several natural drainage options, which would benefit the water quality, hydrology and biological health of Thornton Creek by reducing the impact of Northgate Mall's impervious surfaces.

The options being considered include the use of vegetated swales between rows of parking, which could provide stormwater and aesthetic benefits similar to those SPU has achieved with its natural drainage projects in the Broadview and High Point neighborhoods, as well as porous asphalt and paving stone. All of these options are consistent with ideas the community advocated in comments on the Northgate Mall Development Agreement and the Stakeholders

Dept. of Planning & Development
Northgate Stakeholders
(Document title and date)

Group continues to encourage them. We believe they have the potential to provide very significant environmental benefits that could be a regional and even national model for redevelopment of parking lots. The aesthetic benefits could also be very significant, both for the Northgate community and for businesses at the Mall.

Though it is our understanding that these natural drainage approaches should be cost-effective for water quality treatment and reducing runoff from almost all storms, like other natural drainage systems they may not match the capacity of traditional stormwater vaults to detain runoff from the very largest storms. Considering all of their other environmental and aesthetic benefits, we hope the City will be prepared to offer Simon the flexibility and incentives that may be necessary to achieve the best overall solution. A feasibility study of stormwater alternatives is in the process of being conducted by Simon and SPU. The Natural Drainage Subcommittee will continue to work with Simon and SPU through completion of this study, expected in mid-December, and will report the results to the Stakeholders. If and when sidewalk and right-of-way improvements are made to 1st Ave. NE adjacent to the Mall, the Stakeholders Group encourages the City to incorporate natural drainage features into these designs as well.

Cc: Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Design Review Board